



SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Captain Phineas P. Scraggs has grown up around the docks of San Francisco, and from a boy on a river steamer, risen to the ownership of the steamer Maggie. Since each annual inspection promised to be the last of the old weatherbeaten vessel, Scraggs naturally has some difficulty in securing a crew. When the story opens, Adelbert P. Gibney, blonde but gruff, a man whom nobody but Scraggs would hire, is the skipper. Nella Halvorsen, a solemn Swede, constitutes the to-cast hands, and Hart McGuffey, a wastrel of the Gibney type, relays in the engine room.

CHAPTER II.—With this motley crew and his ancient vessel, Captain Scraggs is engaged in freighting garden truck from Halfmoon bay to San Francisco. The inevitable happens, the Maggie goes ashore in a fog.

CHAPTER III.—A passing vessel, hauling the wreck, Mr. Gibney gets word to a towing company in San Francisco that the ship ashore is the Yankee Prince, with property of a rich salvage. Two tugs succeed in pulling the Maggie into deep water, and she slips her tow lines and gets away in the fog.

CHAPTER IV.

The crews of the Aphrodite and the Bodega, slept late, for they were weary and, fortunately, no calls for a tug came into the office of the Red Star company all morning. About ten o'clock Dan Hicks and Jack Flaherty breakfasted and about ten-thirty both met in the office. Apparently they were two souls with but a single thought, for the right hand of each sought the shelf whereon rested the blue volume entitled "Lloyd's Register." Dan Hicks reached it first, carried it to the counter, wet his tarry index finger and started turning the pages in a vain search for the American steamer Yankee Prince. Presently he looked up at Jack Flaherty.

"Flaherty," he said, "I think you're a liar."

"What came to you and many of them," Flaherty replied, not a bit abashed. "You said she was an eight thousand-ton tramp."

"I never went so far as to say I'd been aboard her on trial trip, though—and did not down her tonnage, shore in I got the fragments of a conversation," Hicks defended himself.

He closed the book with a sigh and placed it back on the shelf, just as the door opened to admit no less a personage than Bartholomew McGuffey, late chief engineer, first assistant, second assistant, third assistant, wiper, boiler, water-tender and stoker of the S. S. Maggie. With a brief nod to Jack Flaherty Mr. McGuffey approached Dan Hicks.

"I been lookin' for you, captain," he announced. "Say, I hear the chief of the Aphrodite's goin' to take a three months' layoff to get shot of his rheumatism. Is that straight?"

"I believe it is, McGuffey."

"Well, say, I'd like to have a chance to substitute for him. You know my capabilities, Hicks, an' if it would be agreeable to you to have me for your chief your recommendation would go a long way toward landin' me the job. I'd sure make them engines behave."

"What vessel have you been on lately?" Hicks demanded cautiously, for he knew Mr. McGuffey's reputation for non-reliability around pay day.

"I been with that freshwater scavenger, Scraggs, in the Maggie for most a year."

"Did you quit or did Scraggs fire you?"

"He fired me," McGuffey replied honestly. "If he hadn't I'd have quit, so it's a toss-up. Comin' in from Halfmoon bay last night we got in the fog an' piled up on the beach just below the Cliff house."

"This is interesting," Jack Flaherty murmured. "You say she walked ashore on you, McGuffey? Well, I'll be shot!"

"She did. Scraggs blamed it on me, Flaherty. He said I didn't obey the signals from the bridge, one word led to another, an' he went dancin' and an' ordered me off his ship. Well, it's his ship—or it was his ship, for I'll bet a dollar she's ground to powder by now—so all I could do was obey. I hepped overboard an' waded ashore. I suppose all my clothes an' things is gone by now. I left everything aboard an' had to borrow this outfit from Scab Johnny." He grinned pathetically.

"So I guess you understand, Captain Hicks, just how bad I need that job. I spoke about a minute ago."

"I'll think it over, Mac, an' let you know," Hicks replied evasively.

Mr. McGuffey, sensing his defeat, retired forthwith to hide his embarrassment and distress; as the door closed behind him, Hicks and Flaherty faced each other.

"Jack," quoth Dan Hicks, "can two towboat men, holdin' down two hundred-dollar jobs an' presumed to have been out of their swaddlin' clothes for at least thirty years, afford to be laughed off the San Francisco waterfront?"

"I know one of them that can't, Dan. At the same time, can a rat like Phineas P. Scraggs and a beachcomber like his mate Gibney make a pair of star-spangled monkeys out of said two towboat men and get away with it?"

"They did that last night. Still, I've known monkeys that would fight an' was human enough to settle a grudge. Follow me, Jack."

Together they repaired to Jackson



"Scraggs," he bawled, "Scraggs-y-y! Help! Murder! It's Hicks and Flaherty! Bring an ax!"

sy-y-y! Help! Murder! It's Hicks and Flaherty! Bring an ax!"

He lunged Dan Hicks at Jack Flaherty; as they collided he rushed in and dealt each of them a powerful poke. However, Messrs. Hicks and Flaherty were sizeable persons and while, individually, they were no match for the tremendous Gibney, nevertheless what they lacked in horsepower they made up in pugnacity—and the salt sea seldom breeds a craven.

Captain Scraggs thrust a frightened face up through the engine-room hatch, but at sight of the battle royal taking place on the deck aft, his blood turned to water and he thought only of escape. To climb up to the bulkhead without being seen was impossible, however, so, not knowing what else to do, he stood on the iron ladder and gazed, pop-eyed with horror, at the unequal contest.

Backward and forward the tide of battle surged. For nearly three minutes all Scraggs saw was an indistinct tangle of legs and arms; then suddenly the combatants disengaged themselves and Scraggs beheld Mr. Gibney prone upon the deck with a gory face upturned to the foggy skies.

When he essayed to rise and continue the contest, Flaherty kicked him in the ribs and Hicks cursed him; so Mr. Gibney, realizing that all was over, bent the deck with his hand in token of surrender. Hicks and Flaherty waited until the fallen gladiator had recovered sufficient breath to sit up; then they pounced upon him, lifted him to the rail, and dropped him overboard. Captain Scraggs shrieked in protest at this added touch of barbarity, and Dan Hicks, turning, beheld Scraggs's white face at the hatch.

"You're next, Scraggs," he called cheerfully, and turned to peer over the rail. Mr. Gibney had emerged on the

surface and was swimming slowly away toward an adjacent float where small boats landed. He climbed wearily up on the float and sat there, gazing across at Hicks and Flaherty without animus, for to his way of thinking he had gotten off lightly, considering the enormity of his offense. The least he had anticipated was three months in hospital, and so grateful was he to Hicks and Flaherty for their forbearance that he struggled a resolve to "buy" for Hicks and Flaherty and thrust them individually—something he was fully able to do—and forgot his aches and pains in a lively interest as to the fate of Captain Scraggs at the hands of the towboat men. He was aware that Captain Scraggs had fallen ignominiously to rally to the Gibney appeal to rebel borders, and in his own expressive terminology he hoped that what the enemy would do to the dastard would be "a plenty."

The enemy, meanwhile, had turned their attention upon Scraggs, who had dodged below like a frightened rabbit and sought shelter in the shaft alley. He had sufficient presence of mind, as he dashed through the engine room, to snatch a large monkey wrench off the tool rack on the wall, and kneeling just inside the alley entrance he turned at bay and threatened the invaders with his weapon. Thereupon Hicks and Flaherty pelted him with lumps of coal, but the sole result of this assault was to force Scraggs further back into the shaft alley and out of range.

The towboat men held a council of war and decided to drown Scraggs out. Dan Hicks ran up on deck and returned dragging the deck fire hose behind him. He thrust the brass nozzle into the shaft-alley entrance and invited Scraggs to surrender unconditionally or be drowned like a kitten. Scraggs, knowing his own fire hose, defied them, so Dan Hicks started the pump while Flaherty turned on the water. Instantly the hose burst up on deck and Scraggs's jaws of triumph filled the engine room. The enemy was about to draw lots to see which one of the two should crawl into the shaft alley and throw a cupful of chloride of lime (for they found a can of this in the engine room) in Captain Scraggs's face, when a shadow darkened the hatch and Mr. Bartholomew McGuffey demanded belligerently: "What's goin' on down there? Who the devil's takin' liberties in my engine room?"

Dan Hicks explained the situation and the just cause for drastic action which they held against the fugitive in the shaft alley. Mr. McGuffey considered a few moments and made his decision.

"If what you say is true—an' I ain't in position to dispute you, not havin' been present when you hauled the Maggie off the beach, I don't blame you for feelin' sore. What I do blame you for, though, is carryin' the war aboard the Maggie. If you wanted to whale Gibney Scraggs you should ha' laid for 'em on the dock. Under the circumstances, you make this a personal affair, an' as a member of the crew of the Maggie I got to take a hand an' defend my skipper agin' youse two. Fact is, gentlemen, I got a date to lick him first for what he done to me last night. However, that's a private grudge. The fact remains that you two jumped my pal Bert Gibney an' belted him somethin' scandalous. Hicks, I'll take you on first. Come up out of there, you swab, and fight. Flaherty, you stay below until I send for you; if you try to climb up an' horn in on my fight with Hicks, Gibney'll brain you."

A faint cheer came from the shaft alley. "Good old Mac, A-t-a-boy!"

"You're on, McGuffey. Nobody ever had to beg me to fight him," Dan Hicks replied cordially, and climbed to the deck. To his great surprise, Mr. McGuffey winked at him and drew him off to the stern of the Maggie.

"There'll be no fight," he declared, "although we'll thud around on deck an' yell a couple of times to make Scraggs think we're goin' to it. He figures that by the time I've fought you an' Flaherty I won't be fit for combat with him, even if I lick you both; he's got it all figured out that I'll wait a couple of days before takin' his cool, an' he thinks my temper'll cool by that time an' he can argue me out of my revenge. Savey?"

"I twix."

Mr. Gibney had returned to the Maggie by this time and he now took his station at the engine-room hatch and growled at Flaherty and abused him. "Keep up your courage, Scraggs," he called, as Hicks and McGuffey pranced around the deck in simulated combat. "Mac's whalin' the whey out o' Hicks an' Hicks couldn't touch him with a buggy whip."

At the conclusion of the three minutes of horse-play, Mr. McGuffey came to the hatch again. "Up with you, Flaherty," he called loud enough for Captain Scraggs to hear, "up with you before I go down after you."

Flaherty was about to possess himself of a hatchet when the face of his confederate, Dan Hicks, appeared over McGuffey's shoulder and grinned knowingly at him. Immediately, Flaherty lurched defiance at his enemies and came up on deck, and once more to Captain Scraggs came the dull sounds of apparent conflict overhead.

Suddenly a cheer broke from Mr. Gibney. "All off an' gone to Cooper-town, Scraggs," he shouted. "Come up an' take a look at the fallen."

Out of the shaft alley came Scraggs with a rush, tossing his wrench aside the better to climb the ladder. He was half way up when Mr. Gibney reached down a great hand, grasped him by the collar, and whisked him out on deck with a single jerk. Here, to his horror, he found himself confronted by a singularly scathless trio who grinned triumphantly at him.

"Seen 'is believin', Scraggs," Dan Hicks informed him. "That's a lesson you taught me an' Flaherty last night, but evidently you don't profit by experience. You're too miserable to beat up, but just to show you it ain't possible for a dirty bay pirate like



"I'll fix the ash hoist and run the bedbugs and cockroaches out of her."

the ash hoist and run the bedbugs an' cockroaches out of her," he added. "You hear that, Gib? McGuffey pleaded. 'Have a heart.'"

"Not unless he gives her a coat of paint an' quits bickerin' about the overline, Bart."

"I promise," Scraggs answered him. "Perched," he added, "you an' dear ol' Mac promises to stick by the ship."

"It's a whack!" yelled Dan Hicks joyfully, and whirling, struck Dan Hicks a mighty blow on the jaw. "Off our ship, you hoodlums!" He favored Jack Flaherty with a hearty thump and swung again on Dan Hicks. "At 'em, Scraggs. Here's where you prove to Gib whether you're a man—thump—or a mouse—thump—or a thump. thump—bottled—thump—"

Dan Hicks had been upset, and as he sprawled on his back on deck, he appeared to Captain Scraggs to offer at least an even chance for victory. So Scraggs, mustering his courage, flew at poor Hicks tooth and toenail. His best was not much but it served to keep Dan Hicks off Mr. McGuffey while the latter was disposing of Jack Flaherty, which he did, via the rail, even as the towboat men had disposed of Mr. Gibney. Dan Hicks followed Flaherty, and the crew of the Maggie crowded the rail as the enemy swam to the float, crawled up on it and departed, vowing vengeance.

"All's well that ends well, gentlemen," Mr. McGuffey announced. "Scraggs's goin' to buy a drink an' the past is buried an' forgotten. Didn't old Scraggs put up a fight, Gib?"

"No, but he tried to, Mac. I'll tell the world he did," and he thrust out the hand of forgiveness to Scraggs, who, realizing he had come very handsomely out of an unlovely situation, clasped the hands of Mr. Gibney and McGuffey and burst into tears. While Mr. McGuffey thumped him between the shoulder blades and cursed him affectionately, Mr. Gibney retired to change into dry garments; when he reappeared the trio went ashore for the promised grog and a tuncion at the skipper's expense.

(Continued next week)

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